

Approved by the GPC on 4/15/19.

Master of Public Administration GRE Waiver Request

The Askew School of Public Administration and Policy requests a waiver of the GRE as an admission criterion for outstanding applicants to its Master of Public Administration (MPA) program. This program is designed to prepare both traditional students and current practitioners to manage and lead public and nonprofit organizations.

Criteria

The GRE requirement will be waived for outstanding applicants meeting one of the following criteria:

- Five years of professional experience in a government agency, nonprofit entity, or private sector organization.
- An undergraduate degree with at least a 3.5 GPA from a North American accredited institution.
- A minimum of 12 hours of completed graduate coursework with at least a 3.0 GPA from a North American accredited postsecondary institution.

Applicants must provide evidence to satisfy the criteria being applied. Note: Applicants with a competitive GRE score will continue to be able to apply to the program and will not be held to these additional criteria.

Rationale

A growing body of research has demonstrated that the GRE, at best, may predict student success in the first year of graduate study and, at worst, may severely limit the number of highly capable women and underrepresented racial/ethnic candidates into certain fields.¹ Currently, we may admit promising students who lack GRE scores to our graduate certificate programs, and such students have had a high rate of success in their graduate courses. We may also grant provisional admission to promising students who have GRE scores that are below our preferred scores, and such students have also shown high success. *As we have no evidence to suggest that GRE scores are predictive of student success in our MPA program, we see no reason not to provide highly qualified applicants the option to waive the GRE requirement.*

Several highly ranked and well-respected MPA programs—including our Florida peers—either do not require the GRE at all or permit applicants to waive the exam requirement in lieu of other criteria. For example, the University of Indiana, the 2019 top-rated MPA program by US News and World Report, does not require the GRE; Rutgers University (rated #5 by US News and World Report) waives the GRE for students with a 3.0 or higher undergraduate GPA; and the University of Central Florida does not require the GRE for admission to its MPA program. *Given the reputation and rankings of elite and Florida peer institutions that already waive the GRE, we see no threat to the prestige or perceived rigor of FSU should we be permitted to do the same.*

¹ For a summary, see: Miller, C., & Stassun, K. (2014). A test that fails. *Nature*, 510(7504), 303-304.

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We plan to begin offering an online option for the MPA program (application is in process), with the goal of significantly expanding our ability to serve mid-career professionals who live outside the Tallahassee area. Taking the GRE is a daunting challenge for many of these professionals as they have been out of college for many years. As our primary Florida competitor institution (UCF) does not require the GRE for its online MPA program, we would face a major competitive disadvantage in recruiting mid-career students if we cannot similarly waive the GRE requirement. *By being innovative and waiving the GRE, we stand to have a competitive edge in the market and attract highly qualified mid-career Florida-based students to our online MPA program. This will allow the School to increase the enrollment of self-pay graduate students and generate more graduate credit hours.*

Criteria Rationale

- **Five years of professional experience in a professional setting.** *By waiving the GRE for students with extensive professional experience, we can admit applicants who have already demonstrated their ability to be a successful professional and are highly likely to be successful in a professional master's degree program.*
- **A completed undergraduate degree with a 3.5 (or higher) GPA from a North American accredited institution.** *We have found that undergraduate GPA is a better prediction of success in graduate studies than the GRE. By waiving the GRE for applicants with high undergraduate GPA, we will be able to admit applicants who have already demonstrated their success in college and are likely to continue their success in a professional graduate program.*
- **Completed 12 hours of graduate courses with a GPA of 3.0 or higher from a North American accredited postsecondary institution.** *We currently allow students who show great promise but who lack a GRE or have undergraduate GPAs slightly below 3.0 to enroll in our graduate certificate programs and have at times allowed such students to enroll as provisional admissions to the MPA program, with the requirement that they attain a GPA of 3.0 or higher in their first semester (12 hours). Such students have typically succeeded in their studies. Expanding this provision will enable us to admit applicants who have already demonstrated a high level of success in graduate school and are likely to continue their success in the MPA program.*